

Against the Grain

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Profile-Helen Henderson

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civilian or military impressions. Clothing is also determined by location. For example, a frontiersman impression would not be appropriate for an urban or a marine engagement.

Our appearance is much cleaner and less ragged than that of the soldiers back then. We're also concerned about our health and safety so we can return to work on Monday morning and continue enjoying this hobby. More men died from disease than from battle, but that's something we don't portray. We don't want to suffer from the same illnesses or jeopardize our health.

We're usually constrained by site rules and modern safety regulations. For example, national parks prohibit casualties and don't allow face-to-face firing. So we have to make accommodations that are satisfying for the participants and that appear realistic to the public. Our weapons also have some safety modifications to protect us and the people around us. Artillery also has to wait 2 to 3 minutes between shots instead of firing as rapidly as possible.

You mentioned safety and casualties. Would you elaborate on that?

Norm: This is theater on a grand scale, and it's an inherently dangerous hobby, so safety is a prime concern. We usually have rescue vehicles on standby at major events and some of our members are medical personnel: doctors, nurses, EMTs etc. The organization I belong to has an excellent safety record as far as weapons. It set the standards for the care and handling of weapons and black powder that other organizations have adopted.

If anybody notices a safety violation, he can raise his hat on a musket or a sword and the action will stop immediately. This is an instance where a private can overrule an officer's command. Sometimes we have a field hospital to demonstrate 18th-century medical practices. The surgeons often look for people to portray patients. Occasionally, they'll get somebody with a real wound and treat them with modern medical techniques.

How do you know when to "die?"

Norm: When your weapon misfires two or three times in a row or when you run out of ammunition, it's a good time to die. Sometimes you're tired and just want to rest or you want to go down to watch the rest of the battle from a good vantage point. Sometimes an officer will say that we need casualties. At other times, the circumstances demand it. For example, one time this summer, a company of redcoats had just discharged their weapons and took cover behind some bushes. My company pursued them, anticipating capturing them before they reloaded. As we came around the bushes, most of them had reloaded and fired at us. Most of us went down. I think we surprised them as much as they surprised us. Usually when we go down, we alert the people aside of us so that nobody thinks we're a real casualty.

You are also working on compiling background documentary databases utilizing

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: Born in Essex, then moved around to university in Hull and Leeds, jobs in London, Oxford and Glasgow, and finally semi-retired to Scotland.

EARLY LIFE: Living in a small village with a brother six years younger and attending school in Frinton-on-Sea and Colchester. I set up my first library aged ten and lent my books for a penny a time to my friends and neighbours.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: My first job was with a small consultancy developing computer-aided indexes, followed by a period at the **BNB** (pre-British Library) doing Dewey classification for the retrospective conversion (I specialize in the 900s). After that, various jobs in Glasgow before coming back to London to work in another consultancy specializing in patent information. I then started my first company doing consultancy and library system software which was sold to **Dawson**, for whom I worked briefly doing publisher relations and licensing. When it was taken over by **RoweCom** I moved swiftly back into consultancy and started working with publishers to organize their customer information and create a master database. In 2005 I merged this company with a Portland based company to form **Ringgold**, which then developed the customer database further. In 2011 I retired from **Ringgold** to go back to the consultancy business.

FAMILY: I am married to **Chris Leamy**, who worked in various roles with the **British Library**, Department for Culture, Media, and Sport and the European Commission. He was also part of the original **Information Power** team and the genius behind the **Ringgold** database.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I love to play golf, and if the weather is too bad I cook or read. I'm joining in the artistic community in Kirkcudbright, but more in a marketing capacity than actually creative (so far).

FAVORITE BOOKS: How do you choose from the many hundreds? Every room in our house is full of bookcases. I love **Bill Bryson**, whose accurate observations can always make me laugh out loud, even after multiple readings. **Jane Duncan** is a Scottish author to whom I completely relate.

PET PEEVES: Profanity, intolerance, people who wear strong perfume on aeroplanes.

PHILOSOPHY: Just get on with it.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Pushing for a standard identifier for institutions which is now the International Standard Name Identifier.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Get my golf handicap down.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: If we have the same changes as in the last five years, publishers will have entirely different business models and librarians will become information scientists (I always considered myself an information scientist rather than a librarian, although I have both qualifications) rather than custodians. 🌳



diaries and other firsthand documents. How much of that have you released, and would you tell us more about that project?

Norm: I've compiled over a thousand published diaries and personal accounts. Many of these were quite difficult to locate and obtain. I thought that if I, as a professor and academic librarian, encountered these obstacles, it would be next to impossible for

the average researcher to get access to much of this material without spending a small fortune on travel.

That convinced me to digitize these accounts to help me in my own research and to benefit that of others. About half of these accounts are available on thematic CD-ROMs from Revolutionaryimprints.com. I also have

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